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Open letter to Minister Pronk

from Yogyakarta Students Communications Forum

Dear Mr Pronk,

Welcome to Indonesia, a country burdened by foreign debt. Your visit to Indonesia has been anxiously anticipated. IGGI funds are often thought of as a cure for Indonesia's ills but Indonesia's dependence on development loans is dangerous; as our debt increases, our hope of solving the terrible problem of poverty in this country dwindles.

We appreciate IGGI's effort in helping Indonesia. But IGGI funds come with interest and political strings attached. We know that the education we receive will not prepare us to face the problem of the ever-increasing national debt. Education in Indonesia teaches us to be silent and obey the authorities. We are not permitted to discuss the issue of national debt, let alone various other issues. Visit Indonesia's prisons and you will meet people whose only crime was to address politically 'sensitive' issues.

It seems to us that part of the hidden cost of the foreign debt is human dignity and human rights. Millions of peasants must be silent while being relocated for the sake of 'stability'. Go and speak to the former residents of the area around Kedung Ombo who are now suffering for the sake of development policies. And if you have time, talk to people in Cimacan, Badega, Blangguan-Situbondo, Pulau Panggung/Lampung, Majalengka. These examples illustrate how development money can be used by the authorities to suppress human rights and democracy. You have stated publicly that the problem of the debt service ratio needs to be addressed, and you hope that Indonesia will become less dependent on the IGGI in the future. We support this position fully.

We also demand that the IGGI:

1. Delay the delivery of IGGI funds until Indonesia [introduces] real democratic reforms.
2. Compel the Indonesian government not to let the foreign debt become a greater burden on the Indonesian people.
3. Recall IGGI funds if they are used in programmes that abuse human rights.

Yogyakarta, 13 April 1990.